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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

Agency Information Collection Activities:

Proposed Collection; Comment Request

AGENCY: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, HHS.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the intention of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to request that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approve the proposed changes to the currently approved information collection project: *“Medical Expenditure Panel Survey –Insurance Component.”* In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501-3521, AHRQ invites the public to comment on this proposed information collection.

This proposed information collection was previously published in the Federal Register on February 18th, 2015 and allowed 60 days for public comment. No comments were received. The purpose of this notice is to allow an additional 30 days for public comment.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by (insert date 30 days after date of publication).

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be submitted to: AHRQ's OMB Desk Officer by fax at (202) 395-6974 (attention: AHRQ's desk officer) or by email at OIRA_submission@omb.eop.gov (attention: AHRQ's desk officer).

Copies of the proposed collection plans, data collection instruments, and specific details on the estimated burden can be obtained from the AHRQ Reports Clearance Officer.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Doris Lefkowitz, AHRQ Reports Clearance Officer, (301) 427-1477, or by email at doris.lefkowitz@AHRQ.hhs.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Proposed Project

Medical Expenditure Panel Survey – Insurance Component

Employer-sponsored health insurance is the source of coverage for 78 million current and former workers, plus many of their family members, and is a cornerstone of the U.S. health care system. The Medical Expenditure Panel Survey – Insurance Component (MEPS-IC) measures on an annual basis the extent, cost, and coverage of employer-sponsored health insurance. These statistics are produced at the National, State, and sub-State (metropolitan area) level for private industry. Statistics are also produced for State and local governments. The MEPS-IC was last approved by OMB on November 21, 2013 and will expire on November 30, 2016. The OMB control number for the MEPS-IC is 0935-0110. All of the supporting documents for the current MEPS-IC can be downloaded from OMB's website at http://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=201310-0935-001.

In order to ensure that the MEPS-IC is able to capture important changes in the employer-sponsored health insurance market due to the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), AHRQ will field a longitudinal survey in 2015 to include a sample of 5,000 small private sector employers that responded to the 2014 MEPS-IC. The OMB clearance that was approved on November 21, 2013 included

the 2014 longitudinal survey, a survey of 3,000 respondents to the 2013 MEPS-IC, but did not include the 2015 longitudinal survey. This submission is for the 2015 longitudinal survey only; there are no other changes.

This research has the following goals:

- 1) Provide data for Federal policymakers evaluating the effects of National and State health care reforms.
- 2) Provide descriptive data on the current employer-sponsored health insurance system and data for modeling the differential impacts of proposed health policy initiatives.
- 3) Supply critical State and National estimates of health insurance spending for the National Health Accounts and Gross Domestic Product.
- 4) Support evaluation of the impact on health insurance offered by small employers due to the implementation of Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) exchanges under the ACA, through the addition of a longitudinal component to the sample.

The MEPS-IC is conducted pursuant to AHRQ's statutory authority to conduct surveys to collect data on the cost, use and quality of health care, including the types and costs of private insurance. 42 USC 299b-2(a).

Method of Collection

To achieve the goals of this project for both private sector and state and local government employers, the following data collections will be implemented:

- 1) Prescreener Questionnaire – The purpose of the Prescreener Questionnaire, which is collected via telephone, varies depending on the insurance status of the establishment contacted. (Establishment is defined as a single, physical location in the private sector and a governmental unit in state and local governments.) For establishments that do not offer health insurance to their employees, the prescreener is used to collect basic information such as number of employees via a phone call. For establishments that do offer health insurance, the prescreener is used to collect contact names and address

information is that are used to mail a written establishment and plan questionnaires. Obtaining this contact information helps ensure that the questionnaires are directed to the person best equipped to complete them.

- 2) Establishment Questionnaire – The purpose of the mailed Establishment Questionnaire is to obtain general information from employers who provide health insurance to their employees. The Questionnaire collects such information as total active enrollment in health insurance, other employee benefits offered, demographic characteristics of employees, and retiree health insurance.
- 3) Plan Questionnaire – The purpose of the mailed Plan Questionnaire is to collect plan-specific information on each plan (up to four) offered by establishments that provide health insurance to their employees. This questionnaire asks about total premiums, employer and employee contributions to the premium, and plan enrollment for each type of coverage offered – single, employee-plus-one, and family – within a plan. It also asks for information on deductibles, copays, and other plan characteristics.
- 4) Longitudinal Sample (LS) -- For 2015, an additional sample of small employers (those with 100 or fewer employees) will be included in the collection. The LS will consist of 5,000 small, private-sector employers who responded to the 2014 MEPS-IC regular survey. These employers will be surveyed again in 2015 – using the same collection methods as the regular survey – in order to track changes in their health insurance offerings, characteristics, and costs.

The primary objective of the MEPS-IC is to collect information on employer-sponsored health insurance. Such information is needed in order to provide the tools for Federal, State, and academic researchers to evaluate current and proposed health policies and to support the production of important statistical measures for other Federal agencies.

Estimated Annual Respondent Burden

Exhibit 1 shows the estimated annualized burden hours for the respondent's time to provide the requested data for the 2015 longitudinal survey. The Prescreener questionnaire will be completed by 4,300 respondents and takes about 5 ½ minutes to complete. The Establishment questionnaire will be completed by 2,054 respondents and takes about 23 minutes to complete. The Plan questionnaire will be completed by 2,054 respondents and will require an average of 1.4 responses per respondent. Each Plan questionnaire takes about 11 minutes to complete. The total burden hours are estimated to be 1,686 hours.

Exhibit 2 shows the estimated annualized cost burden associated with the respondents' time to participate in this data collection. The annualized cost burden is estimated to be \$52,709.

Exhibit 1. Estimated burden hours for the 2015 Longitudinal Survey

Form Name	Number of respondents	Number of responses per respondent	Hours per response	Total burden hours
Prescreener Questionnaire	4,326	1	0.09	389
Establishment Questionnaire	2,078	1	0.38*	790
Plan Questionnaire	2,078	1.4	0.18	524
Total	8,482	na	na	1,703

* The burden estimate printed on the establishment questionnaire is 45 minutes which includes the burden estimate for completing the establishment questionnaire, an average of 1.4 plan questionnaires, plus the prescreener. The establishment and plan questionnaires are sent to the respondent as a package and are completed by the respondent at the same time.

Exhibit2. Estimated cost burden for the 2015 Longitudinal Survey

Form Name	Number of respondents	Total burden hours	Average hourly wage rate*	Total cost burden
Prescreener Questionnaire	4,326	389	\$30.95	\$12,040
Establishment Questionnaire	2,078	790	\$30.95	\$24,451
Plan Questionnaire	2,078	524	\$30.95	\$16,218
Total	8,482	1,703	na	\$52,709

*Based upon the mean hourly wage for Compensation, Benefits, and Job Analysis Specialists occupation code 13-1141, at <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes131141.htm> (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.)

Request for Comments

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, comments on AHRQ's information collection are requested with regard to any of the following: (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of AHRQ health care research and information dissemination functions, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of AHRQ's estimate of burden (including hours and costs) of the proposed collection(s) of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and included in the Agency's subsequent request for OMB approval of the proposed information collection. All comments will become a matter of public record.

Dated: April 27, 2015.

Sharon B. Arnold,
Deputy Director, AHRQ.

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